

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Additional Learning Support (ALS) Provision and Funding Claims Process Full Manual

Activate Apprenticeships Practitioner
Improvement Project

OCTOBER 2023

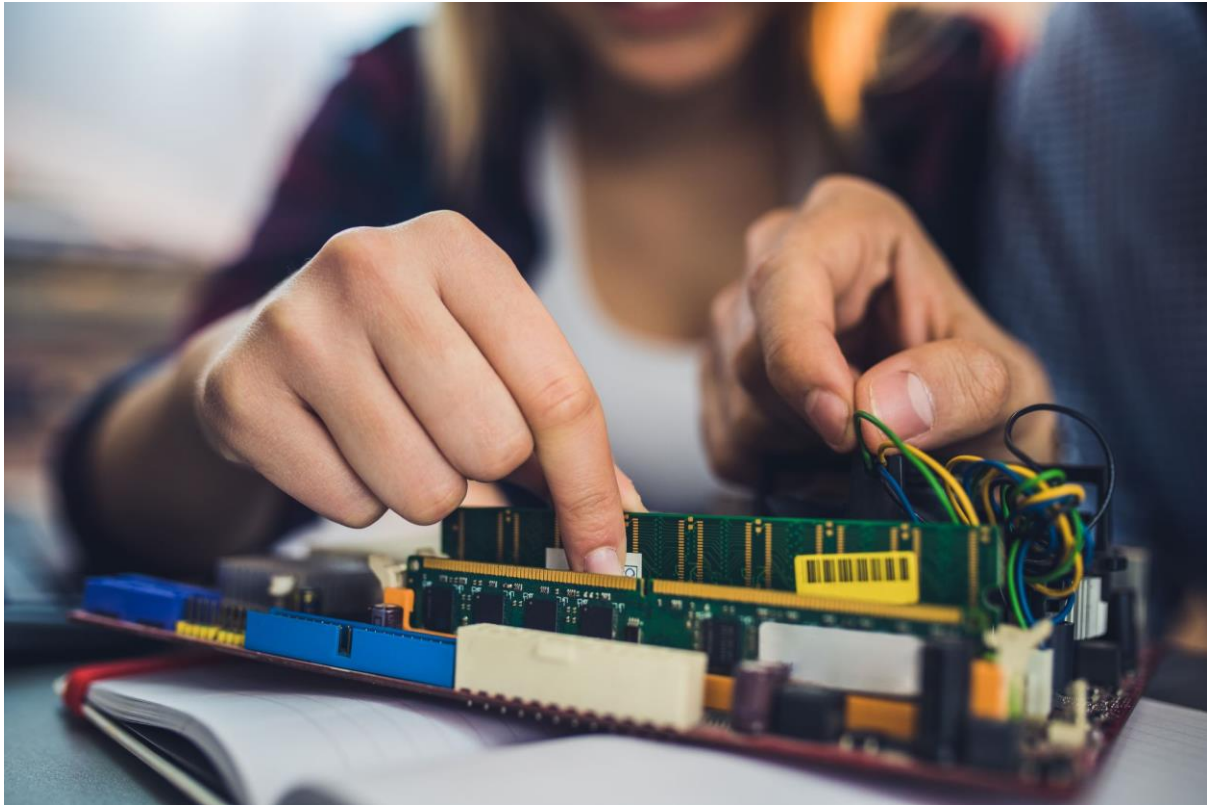
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ALS / ALN Provision and Funding



Introduction

The Activate Learning group is on an ambitious mission to transform lives through learning by enabling opportunities, creating life chances, and generating prosperity for individuals and communities. In achieving this mission, Activate Learning is committed to advancing equality of opportunity, respecting, and celebrating difference, eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and fostering good relations.

The Learning Philosophy and our Values underpin equality, diversity, and inclusion. We believe that everyone has the capacity and ability to learn and develop and we aim to promote a culture of equitable opportunity for staff and students across Regions, Faculties, Services, Teams, and Departments. We strive to provide a safe, professional, accessible environment; delivering services, education and progression opportunities that are inclusive and allow individuals from all walks of life to access free from prejudice and/or discrimination.

The Equality Act calls the arrangements that we need to make as an education provider 'Reasonable Adjustments'. Adjustments might include providing exam papers in alternative formats, provision of a scribe or extra time, or advising on display solutions for screen users. We have a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments for any learner who has a disability or impairment, health condition or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia that may need certain facilities, assistive technology, or support services to enable them to make the most of their studies or training. This can include alternative exam or assessment arrangements.

We will as far as possible, anticipate and remove any likely barriers to learners with health conditions or impairments. Where that is not possible, reasonable adjustments will be made to overcome those barriers as far as reasonably practicable. Additional Learning Support (ALS) funding can be claimed for any learner that requires Additional Learning Support, this could be due to a known disability, an undiagnosed issue, a mental health issue or a short-term difficulty that the learner is experiencing.

Within the Activate Apprenticeships Team we have a high number of Performance Coaches (PC's) that are providing ALS support to our learners at a high level, however as a business we have not been claiming the available ALS funding to support us in this delivery. Each Learner with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is entitled to extra support which is funded at the rate of £150pcm – where evidence of the extra support is provided – which over the entire Activate Apprenticeships provision is worth approximately £37,500pcm, or £450,000 each academic year. This is money that can be used to support our existing teams and to recruit and provide even more specialist Additional Learning Support (ALS) and Special Education Needs / Disability (SEN/D) provision.

This ALS funding that we can claim is not additional funds that we can access, but instead is money that has already been allocated to Activate Learning to spend on giving the required ALS support to our Learners, but if we do not have robust evidence-based records of the ALS provided and follow the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) guidelines, then it must be paid back to the ESFA – this was to the tune of £350,000 for the 22/23 Academic Year.

The recent Education Training Foundation (ETF) funded Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) Practitioner Improvement Plan (PIP) that we were awarded has

allowed a group of Activate Staff, including Group Learning Support, Funding, Compliance and Apprenticeship staff and leaders to work together to identify the best ways to move forwards and to be able to claim and retain the money that is available for the support we are already – or should be - giving. This workgroup has looked at the best ways to record the support being given, to put together a robust and easily followed process to ensure our claims are valid and to provide extra resource to enable our Performance Coaches to give the extra support to our Learners to enable them to progress and complete despite and challenges that they face.

The culmination of this work is that we are hoping to be able to provide our PCs with greater support and an improved personal toolkit of skills to support our learners no matter what their ALS need is, to see improvements in the Learner Experience and the retention rates for Learners with ALN / SEND, and to ensure that we can retain the funding for the work that we are doing.

We have looked at keeping the required paperwork for the new process as simple and efficient as possible while also ensuring that it provides a robust set of evidence that can be used to ensure we do not lose any funding to clawback during any future ESFA audit.

It does mean a little extra paperwork – which will be 100% compliance audited – but the benefits of having the evidence available to show the support we are giving, and the extra funding being retained certainly outweigh the slight increase in paperwork that is required.

The following pages will give you an insight into the new process and why each stage must be completed in full, once you have received a briefing on the new process and read this resource then you should be able to start to implement the process that will allow us to claim the ALS funding we are entitled to for the work that we are already doing.

There will also be a shorter Process Guide that can be used as a checklist for you're the onboarding and diagnostics, planning and support delivery, and for the Learning Support Monthly Review and claims process to be completed each month.

Don't forget, there is a summary on the last page that simply lays out the steps in the process and who is responsible for what. As always, if you have any questions then please contact me directly.

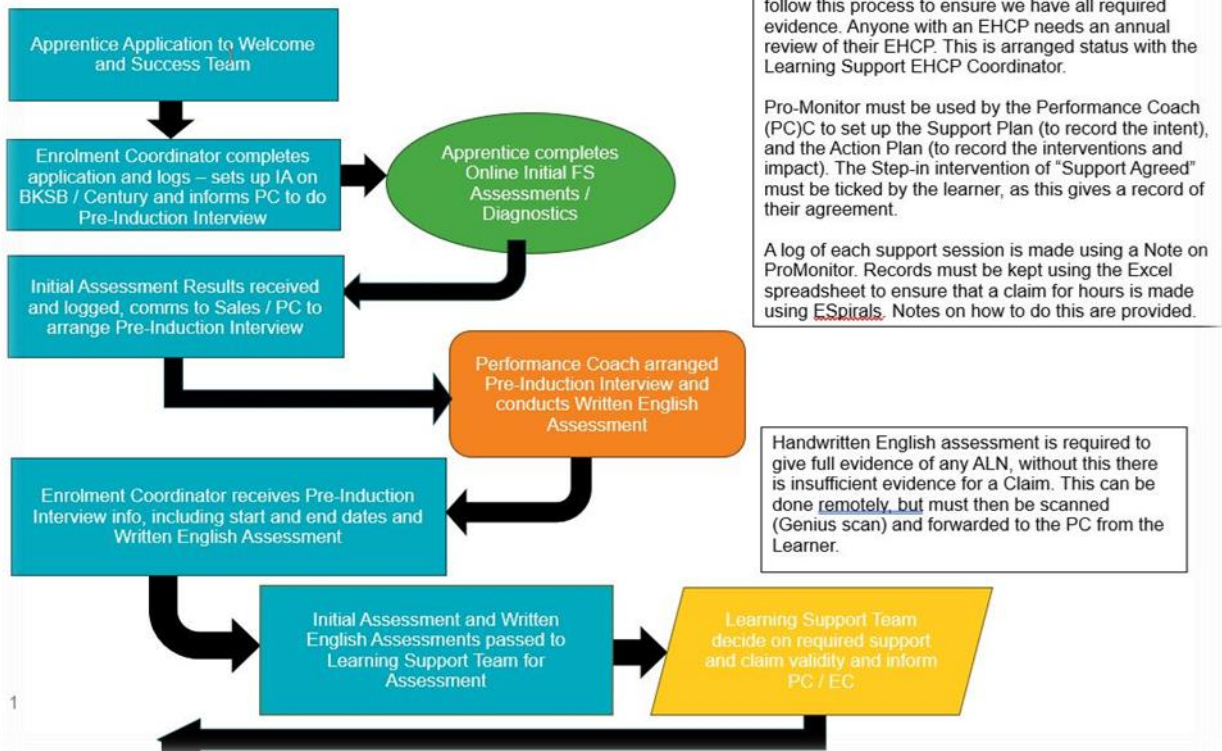
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ALS Claim Process Route map

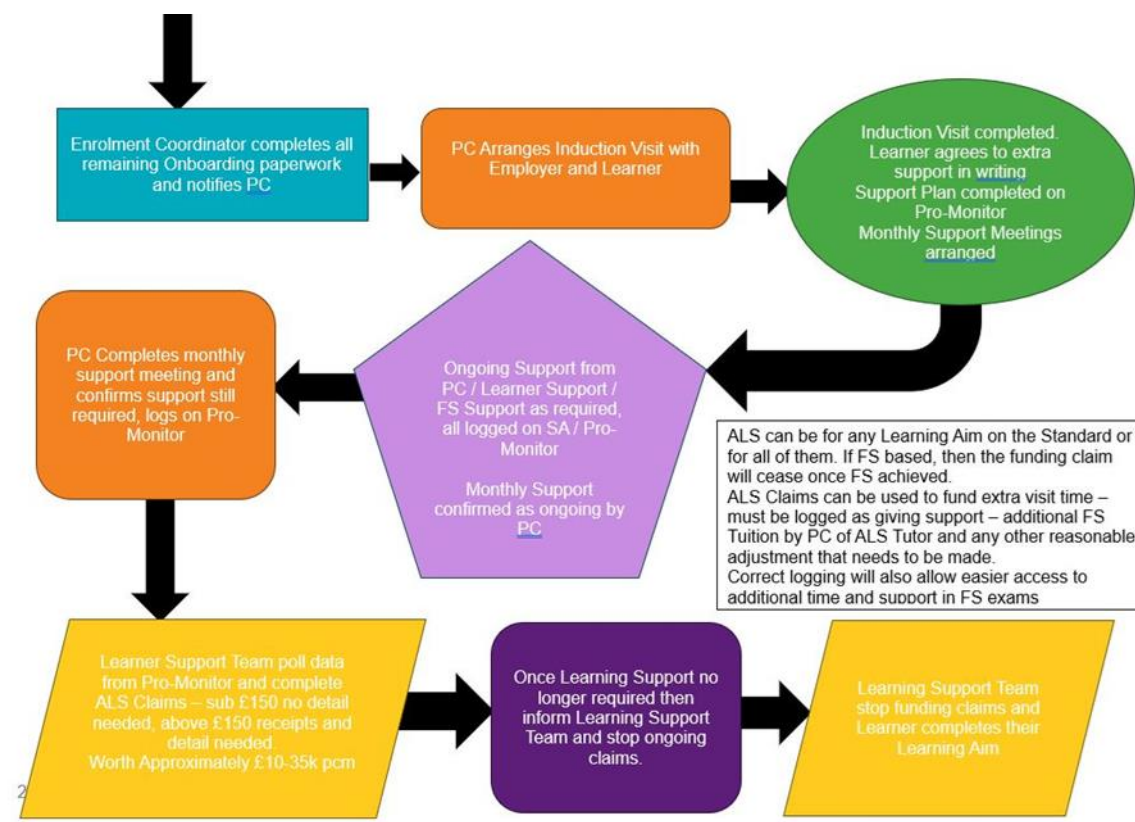


Any learner with evidenced ALS Needs (EHCP, Diagnostic) or any self-declared ALS support should follow this process to ensure we have all required evidence. Anyone with an EHCP needs an annual review of their EHCP. This is arranged status with the Learning Support EHCP Coordinator.

Pro-Monitor must be used by the Performance Coach (PC) to set up the Support Plan (to record the intent), and the Action Plan (to record the interventions and impact). The Step-in intervention of "Support Agreed" must be ticked by the learner, as this gives a record of their agreement.

A log of each support session is made using a Note on ProMonitor. Records must be kept using the Excel spreadsheet to ensure that a claim for hours is made using ESpirals. Notes on how to do this are provided.

Handwritten English assessment is required to give full evidence of any ALN, without this there is insufficient evidence for a Claim. This can be done remotely, but must then be scanned (Genius scan) and forwarded to the PC from the Learner.



ALS can be for any Learning Aim on the Standard or for all of them. If FS based, then the funding claim will cease once FS achieved. ALS Claims can be used to fund extra visit time – must be logged as giving support – additional FS Tuition by PC of ALS Tutor and any other reasonable adjustment that needs to be made. Correct logging will also allow easier access to additional time and support in FS exams

Apprenticeship Workforce Development Practitioner Improvement Project

Intent

Assessment and support for learners with SEND/Learning Difficulties is inconsistent across our apprenticeship delivery and identified in our Improvement Plan. There are a high proportion of learners with additional needs within our national provision which consists of both Cycles (175 apprentices: L2 Bicycle Mechanic Standard) and Business School (500 apprentices: L3 Team Leader and L5 Operations/ Departmental Manager Standards).

The recent St Martin's Group Report identified lack of support from tutors (26%), poor teaching quality (24%) and a loss of interest or motivation (27%) as reasons for withdrawal from programme. Although not made explicit in this research, underlying specific learning difficulties could understandably impact each of these categories and, if not well supported, contribute to programme withdrawal.

This action research activity will focus on identifying the range and impact of different approaches to additional learning needs assessment and support, exploring the reasons behind this inconsistency and share a preferred approach.

Rationale

Initial surveying of the Activate Apprenticeships Team provided us with the following data –

- On a scale of 1-10 how confident are you in supporting learners with ALN / SEND to progress in their Apprenticeship Main Aim? – 6.36/10
- On a scale of 1-10 how confident are you in supporting learners with ALN / SEND through their Functional Skills training and delivery? – 4.79/10
- On a scale of 1-10 how capable do you feel you are in dealing with ALN / SEND support for your Apprentices? 6.43/10
- Do you claim any additional ALN / SEND funding for any of your apprentices – 14%

This identifies that not only are we not claiming the funding to which we are entitled, but that overall, we are not confident that the support we are giving to our learners with ALS needs is sufficient or consistent.

Through an ESFA Education and Training Foundation (ETF) Project we have been awarded a Grant of £5000 to be able to look at how we can improve our provision as part of the Apprenticeship Workforce Development Program (AWD) – Practitioner Improvement Plan.

This funding was awarded after we applied to the ETF to address the disparate ALS provision across the various Apprenticeship Teams and to standardise the support, processes, and procedures in order to enable us to robustly claim the ALS Payments to which we are entitled.

The project was launched in March and runs until October, during which time the intent has been to identify our best practices, to review the ALS claims system and to put in place resource and procedures that allow for improved ALS support and a much more robust system for claiming and retaining the ALS funding to which we are entitled.

Through bringing together a workgroup of people from Apprenticeships, Group Learning Support, Finance, Compliance and Management we have identified the most practical system for ensuring that our claims meet all the Apprenticeship Compliance Framework requirements and to agree the process and procedures that need to be followed by Welcome and Success Coordinators, Apprenticeship Performance Coaches (PC's) and Group Learning Support staff to ensure we are fully compliant.

We have sought to keep the need to use new systems and paperwork to an absolute minimum, and although there is a small additional administrative burden for each PC to deliver, the hopes are that the increased revenues will offset this, and that over time the systems can be further integrated to reduce the administration that is needed to safely claim the ALS funding.

These procedures and new ways of working will be trialled from September 2023 by the Cycles, Business School, and Educator Academy Teams with any of their Apprentices who have more than 6 months left on their Apprenticeship Course. A 100% Compliance Audit into the funding claims will be conducted and once we are

certain that the process meets all our requirements it will then be rolled out into the wider Apprenticeship Team, planned for January 2024.

It is hoped that the improved awareness and knowledge of our PC Teams will result in better support for our learners with ALS / SEND needs which in turn will result in less withdrawals and Learners going PPED. By having a robust process in place for claiming the ALS payments we will also be able to provide extra resource and staff to provide specialist support to Learners and PC's where the support falls outside of their capability to assist. This will include specialist 121 FS support for those Learners who are unable to access the Lifeskills online FS training.

Methodology

Our organisation has a high commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and employs neurodiverse staff. There is some inconsistency of practice relating to assessing and supporting learners with additional needs between different areas of our apprenticeship provision and between apprenticeship in general and our other provision types. We expect that through this action research we can ensure that our apprentices with additional needs have the same access to assessment and support as every other learner within our organisation.

This research relates to the cross-cutting theme of identification and support for learners with SEND/Learning Difficulties.

To be manageable within the time frame we will focus on two areas of apprenticeship delivery, Cycles and Business School, which are very different in their approaches. This choice covers 675 apprentices from Level 2 - 5, including both technical and management pathways.

We will undertake the following activities:

Phase One: Exploring Solutions

- Undertake short desk-based research into current best practice for identifying and supporting apprentices with SEND/Learning Difficulties, including accessing funding
- Create a survey and hold a focus group with apprentices with SEND/Learning Difficulties from each area/Standard

- Create a survey and hold a focus group with the Performance Coaches from each area/Standard
- Meet with our study support team to identify best practice across other provision types

Phase Two: Testing the Solution

- Identify and document preferred approach based on Phase One outcomes
- Undertake piloting of updated approach with Cycles and Business School
- Interview ten newly enrolled apprentices with declared difficulties who have experienced the updated approach

Phase Three: Review and Dissemination

- Review survey and interview data to judge the efficacy of the new approach
- Decide on what should be recommended for continued use and any further changes required
- Hold an outcomes workshop across all apprenticeship team to introduce the new approach
- Create final digital report of the whole project for sharing these findings across the sector

In the timescale we will not be able to evidence impact on retention, but we will compare apprentices reported positive experience of and satisfaction with assessment and support between Phase One and Phase Three.

Outcomes

1. Improved Learner support leading to reduced withdrawals and improvements in Completion rates across the Apprenticeship Provision.
2. Increased ability to provide ALS Support across the Apprenticeships Provision – through resources, standardisation, and staff training – improving the Learner experience and staff capability.
3. Improved robust ALS Support Procedures and processes that will allow better understanding of the provision being given and provide good evidence of the support being provided.

4. Revised ALS funding claim procedure that allows for robust claiming of the funding that we are entitled to.

With an ALS Cohort of approximately 250 Apprentices and a monthly ALS payment of £150pcm – where evidence of the extra support is provided – the entire Activate Apprenticeships provision is worth approximately £37,500pcm, or £450,000 to the company each academic year.

Although this is a significant sum of monies, as has already been noted, it is not the main reason why we are addressing our ALS provision, instead the rationale is to comply with funding regulations, to improve our Learner Experience, to offer better support and to ensure we do everything possible to improve our retention and successful completions while reducing our withdrawals.

Trial Information

The Cycles, Business School and Educator Academy Teams have all agreed to be a part of the Initial ALS Trial, this will put the new process and procedures into use and allow us to understand whether the process works and is fully feasible and provides robust evidence for funding before it is then rolled out to the wider of the Apprenticeship Team.

During September a number of Training Sessions will be run for these Teams to introduce them to the ALS requirements, compliance issues and the systems to be used. Once the Training is completed then it is expected that all PC's will follow the new process and procedures with their ALS Learners to enable funding claims to be made. All ALS support administration, evidence and paperwork will be subject to 100% compliance audit while the initial trial runs to ensure we are fully compliant with the ESFA Apprenticeship Compliance Framework.

Not all ALS Learners receiving support will be included in the initial trial, those learners who are PPED or have less than 6 months left on their course will still receive the support they need but will not have the formal evidence in place to allow a robust claim of the ALS support provided.

The table below gives the initial data on cohort sizes and number of ALS Learners

Team	Staff Member	Caseload	Total Declared
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		Actual or Planned	ALN / EHCP
Cycles	Alistair Mackenzie	40	9
Cycles	Adam Harries	20	2
Cycles	Ben Roberts	35	6
Cycles	Paul Godfrey	30	2
Cycles	Simon Tring	25	3
Cycles	Tim Smith	15	1
Business School	Amanda Bradford	35	1
Business School	Kevin Hilton	30	2
Business School	Emma Watson	36	3
Business School	Helen Tabern-McKnight	40	3
Business School	Clifford Pratt	38	4
Business School	Jannine Taylor	39	2
Business School	Andy Portsmouth	41	2
Business School	Asa Bradford	45	1
Business School	Bridget Johnson	44	1
Business School	Adam Keys	41	1

Educator Academy	Sarah Williams	20	1
Team	Staff Member	Caseload Actual or Planned	Total Declared ALN / EHCP
Educator Academy	Angie Lalanne	20	3?
Educator Academy	TBC	20	?
Totals			47

47 Learners in the trial at £150 claim per calendar month = £7,050pcm = £84,600pa

The training deliver will be split into 2 parts, one specific CPD session on how to effectively support ALS Learners and another on the Compliance and System processes that need to be followed. These can be offered as individual sessions or delivered one after another, whichever works best for the Team involved.

In addition to the formal training starting in September we will be providing a twice weekly drop-in session for PCs to attend if they require clarification or help with any of the Learners on their Caseload or have any issues with the ALS Funding Claims and the systems in use. Attendance for these will be on a drop-in basis, if you need to attend then pop along and I will be available to help answer your questions, support, and coach you as needed or to signpost you to further help if needed.

There is also the opportunity for anyone who needs it to book a one-off individual Coaching or 121 sessions with Suzanne throughout the week, please email me if you want to arrange a meeting and we will work out a mutually convenient time. This is in addition to the opportunity that is available for the more formal individual Professional Coaching, which usually happens over a 6 to 8 session schedule as decided by the individual to work on any area they wish. To arrange a course of Professional Coaching please make the request through your Line Manager, although you can also contact Suzanne directly.

Once the Trial phase is complete then the process will be rolled out to the wider Apprenticeships Teams, which is planned for January 2024. This should give us a total cohort of approximately 250 ALS Apprentices.

Additional Learning Support Funding Rules

Looking directly at the Apprenticeship Funding Rules we find the following information and guidance on ALS funding, detailing the required evidence, the process that must be followed and the amounts that can be claimed. It is worthwhile taking a read through the text included below (in dark blue), however, in summary what it states is that Learner Support Funding (LSF1) is paid at a rate of £150 per month to help providers make reasonable adjustments for an individual's learning needs as part of their apprenticeship. LSF1 is provided via the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). To access LSF1 the provider must:

- carry out an assessment to identify what support the apprentice needs
- deliver support and review the apprentice's progress/continuing needs
- record and gather appropriate evidence to show that support has been given and relevant outcomes are recorded
- report in the ILR that the apprentice has a learning support need and what that support need is.

The rest of this document will provide you with an understanding of how we will undertake the Initial Assessment and Diagnostics, the Learning Support Plan, Support that we can give to a Learner, the Monthly Learning Support Review and Funding Claims as well as EAA and EPA support.

Taken directly from Apprenticeship funding rules 2023 to 2024 Pages 16 to 19

Assessment for learning support funding

29. As part of the initial assessment (which is an eligible cost), the provider must undertake a screening exercise for learning support.

29.1. Where this assessment identifies potential learning difficulties and / or disabilities, and before a claim for learning support funding (to cover the cost of

reasonable adjustments) can be made, the provider may need to undertake a further detailed assessment to identify whether an apprentice has a learning difficulty or disability that directly impacts their ability to complete the apprenticeship on which they are enrolled.

29.1.1 This further detailed assessment is not eligible for funding.

29.1.2 The provider must refer to the evidence requirements below to ensure they meet the requirements for claiming.

29.1.3 More information on what assessments need to be undertaken can be found within the 'Learning support funding for apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities' guidance on GOV.UK.

29.2. A learning difficulty or disability that does not require reasonable adjustments or cannot be evidenced as directly impacting on the apprentice's ability to complete their apprenticeship will not be eligible for learning support funding. Learning support is not available:

29.2.1 To deal with everyday difficulties, which includes the definition as per Section 15ZA (7) of the Education Act 1996, that are not directly associated with the apprenticeship. If an apprentice needs help at work, they may be able to get help from Access to Work;

29.2.2 To address any learning gaps in an apprentice's prior knowledge, skills, or behaviours where these are relevant to their apprenticeship, but where there is no identified learning difficulty or disability in respect of obtaining this learning (see paragraphs 26 to 27); or

29.2.3 Where there are no costs incurred in putting in place reasonable adjustments.

Claiming learning support funding

30. The provider can only claim learning support funding for each month in which reasonable adjustments are provided to the apprentice and where evidence of costs can be provided. For months in which no reasonable adjustments are necessary, or no costs have been incurred, a claim for learning support funding must not be made.

31. Learning support funding is fixed at a monthly rate of £150.

31.1. This will be paid, to the provider, in the months in which reasonable adjustments are necessary and delivered, where they are evidenced and where this has been reported in the ILR.

31.1.1 Learning support funding is not deducted from the employer's apprenticeship service account, nor does it require employer co-investment.

31.2. If the cost exceeds £150 per month, but is less than £19,000 per annum, the provider can claim the additional costs via the earnings adjustment statement (EAS). Further information on the EAS can be found on GOV.UK.

31.3. The monthly payment cannot be used to pay for costs for any further detailed assessment, as this is not eligible to be funded by us (see paragraph 29.1.1).

31.4. Ongoing delivery and need for learning support must be reviewed monthly. Where the review determines that learning support funding is no longer needed, providers must immediately stop claiming these payments by updating the ILR appropriately.

32. The provider must promptly claim for learning support funding through the ILR and the EAS. We will not pay for claims from a previous funding year if claims are not made on time. The deadline for claiming is the last ILR collection for each funding year.

Apprentices who need access to exceptional learning support (ELS)

33. An apprentice who requires substantial reasonable adjustments to start or continue learning can get access to exceptional learning support if the cost of these reasonable adjustments exceeds £19,000 in a funding year. The provider must submit ELS claims to us at the beginning of the apprenticeship, or when it is identified that the apprentice requires support costing more than £19,000 in the funding year.

33.1. The provider must complete and send the ELS claim form to us so that we can authorise the request. The exceptional learning support cost form can be accessed on GOV.UK.

Evidence requirements

- Where the provider has identified a learning difficulty or disability, they must

(1) evidence that an assessment has been carried out and hold a copy of the assessment results which identifies the apprentice's learning difficulty or disability;

(2) evidence/details of the reasonable adjustments that are necessary to enable the apprentice to complete the apprenticeship on which they are enrolled; and

(3) include a description of how progress towards the completion of the apprenticeship would be directly impacted if the reasonable adjustments listed were not put in place for the apprentice.

- The provider has documented evidence of how they plan to deliver the necessary reasonable adjustments throughout the apprenticeship. This plan has been agreed and signed-off by the apprentice, prior to a claim for learning support funding being made, and where the apprentice has given consent this information has been shared with their employer.

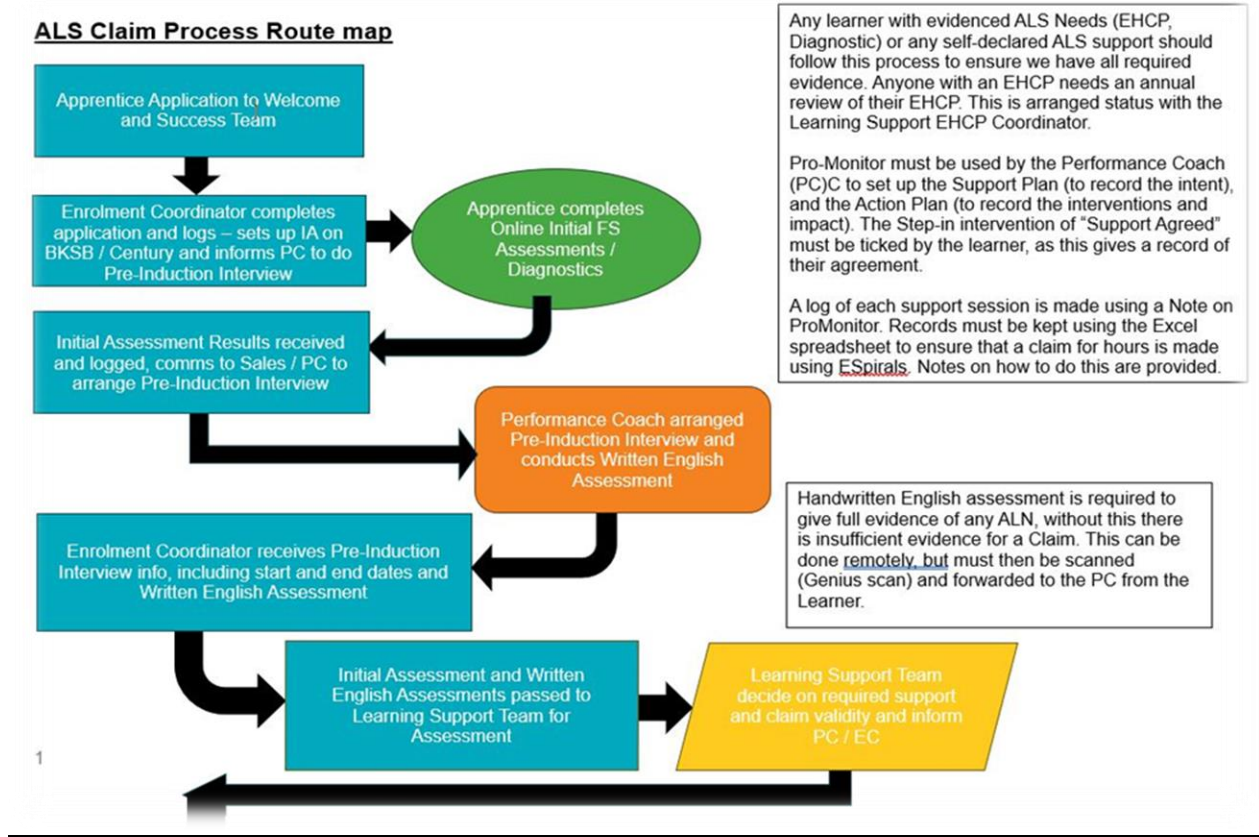
- For the months where learning support funding is claimed, the provider has evidence and documented details of the necessary reasonable adjustments that have been delivered in that period. Learning support funding will only be paid in months where the reasonable adjustments are required and are being delivered.

Where costs exceed £150 per month the provider must provide invoices to evidence the actual costs incurred (claimed via the Earnings Adjustment Statement).

- The provider has documented evidence of monthly reviews being undertaken throughout the apprenticeship to ensure that reasonable adjustments are still necessary and appropriate (for the apprenticeship). This evidence confirms the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments and how these have been adapted where necessary. Where amendments to the original plan are required, these will need to be documented, signed-off by the apprentice and evidenced accordingly.

- Where exceptional learning support (ELS) is claimed for an apprentice, the provider has the application and supporting evidence for this claim. This includes details of the reasonable adjustments and the actual costs incurred.

Initial Assessment and Diagnostics



Initial Assessment and Diagnostics can be easily split into 3 areas, the information gathered on the application and the FS Initial Assessments assigned to the Learner by the Enrolment Coordinator, the Handwritten writing exercise and Pre-Induction Interview and the decision made by a SENCO qualified member of the Group Learning Support Team.

The key to providing good ALS is in understanding the Learners individual needs, this process starts at the Initial Application and Assessment, and continues throughout the whole Apprenticeship, remember, Learners who do not have an ALS may need extra support that can qualify as ALS for funding purposes should they experience issues in their private lives.

When completing an Apprenticeship Application, a Learner is asked to inform us of any ALS / ALN / SEN/D requirements, these can be accompanied by an EHCP or they

can be self-assessed, however some Learners may not declare their issue if they are embarrassed about it, feel their Employer may not support them or do not believe that it will impact upon their ability to do the job. Our role is not to judge, but instead to find out the information we need to be able to give them the best support we are able. The key here is open and honest communication, we are not looking for excuses or mitigation as to why the Learner may not be suitable for the course or may not make proper progress, but instead at how we can provide the individual support they need to succeed with their studies.

From a funding perspective it does not matter whether the learner has a diagnosed condition and EHCP, a self-declared ALN or something later comes to light that requires ALS, as long as we follow a robust process to gather the evidence during their Initial Assessment and Pre-Induction Interviews – or later for something that becomes apparent - and pass the details on to the Group Learning Support Team for a qualified SENCO to make the decision on the funding, then we are complying with the ESFA Funding Rules.

The first evidence required is the Initial Assessments for FS, this will give us an understanding of their ability at the start point and may indicate any ALN that they have. This will be gathered using the Century / BKSB systems as set by the Enrolment Coordinator as part of their initial application and onboarding process.

The next step is the Pre-Induction Interview, this needs to include a handwritten writing task that we must have to add to the Century / BKSB Initial Assessment results for the Learning Support Team to have the required evidence to decide on the ALS Funding for the Learner's support needed. The Pre-Induction Interview is crucial to understanding the Learner's individual needs and can provide good, documented evidence as well as to set the tone of the Learner's experience.

A good Pre-Induction Interview, conducted thoroughly with respect and exploring the Learners own understanding of their individual needs can give us the basic outline of the support plan that they will require and in what areas. For some learners it may be that they need nothing more than some specific help with FS, or other short-term adjustments to help them cope with an issue that has arisen in their lives, for other learners they may need a greater set of ongoing reasonable adjustments, which could include aid with applying for the Apprenticeship, the way we teach and assess

throughout the Apprenticeship and adjustments to their End Point Assessment (EPA). The sooner we can identify their individual needs, the sooner we can put the plans in place to support them and to ensure that they make good progress throughout their Apprenticeship and Learner Journey.

Questions we should be asking when it comes to the area of any Learning Difficulties or Support needs that they may have should include the following –

- Do you have any disabilities or learning difficulties, or an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan)?
- How has this affected you in the past?
- What support or reasonable adjustments have you received in the past?
- What additional support can we provide you with to help you achieve your apprenticeship?
- Which specific areas do you think you will need Additional Support with? Is it just for FS or is it a learning difficulty that will require reasonable adjustments to be made to the way we teach and assess the program main aims.
- Will you agree to a formal support plan being put in place and reviewed monthly?
- Are we ok to talk to and involve your Employer in your support plan?

The answer to each of these questions will give the Group Learning Support Team the information they require and give you a good starting point for what you will need to include in the Learning Support Plan and do to support the

Once the Pre-Induction interview is completed, along with the FS Initial Assessments and the Handwritten exercise then the Enrolment Coordinator will pass this over to the Group Learning Support Team for a qualified SENCO to make the decision as to whether we have sufficient evidence to be able to instigate an ALS claim. If we have robust diagnostic evidence in place at this time, then we can claim the first £150 of ALS for the Initial Assessment and diagnostic process.

After the Group Learning Support Team have made their decision on whether the funding claim for ALS is sound, and the Enrolment Coordinator has completed all the remaining enrolment processes then the Performance Coach can arrange the

Induction visit with the Learner and Employer. I would recommend allowing extra time for this visit– plan for at least an extra hour to begin with - as it will include both the normal Induction and to complete the Learner Support Plan on ProMonitor. This Learning Support Plan must detail the scope and parameters of the agreed ALS support, what reasonable adjustments we are making - how we will adapt our delivery and evidence gathering, any specific ways of working the Learner needs, and the frequency of meetings – which for funding reasons must be completed at least once each calendar month.

If a Learner asks that you do not include their Employer in the Support plan or does not want their ALN to be known by the Employer then this has to be complied with, and you must make sure that nothing about the plan is put on our systems where the Employer could find it, such as in the Learning Plan or other Employer accessible areas of Smart Assessor.

What to do when an ALS issue becomes apparent after Induction is complete?

Not all Learners who require ALS are obvious when they first apply or start on their Apprenticeship Journey, some Learners are concerned that in mentioning their ALS they could be disadvantaged in getting their Apprenticeship, or they may be unaware of their Learning Needs, or in some cases it may be a short-term support issue linked to something other than a Learning Disability, which can still render them needing ALS.

If we have their Initial Assessment and Handwritten Assignment from their Pre-Induction Interview we can still seek to offer and claim for support later, we just need to evidence why it is needed and what support is being given. If it becomes apparent to you that a learner has a need – due to a learning disability or due to short-term difficulties – Mental Health, Financial, Family related – then contact the Group Learning Support Team for a decision on whether ALS Funding is applicable and meets the eligibility criteria. Even if the funding cannot be claimed, we still have a duty of care to support the Learner to the very best of our abilities, remember, if it is something you do not know how to deal with we have specialist that are here to help with information, advice, and guidance to both you as the PC and to the Learner as an individual.

Learner Support Planning

To meet the ESFA Funding Regulations and to provide clear evidence of all support being given to the Learner for any future ESFA Audit or OFSTED Inspection we have to put in place a detailed individualised Learning Support Plan that covers all aspects of the planned support, details the dates / frequency of additional support, and also confirms that the Learner is happy to receive the Additional Learning Support. Without the plan and the Learner's ongoing consent we are unable to claim the funding for the support we are providing.

After looking at all the available ways we can record the Learner Support Plan and talking through the options with all the stakeholders it has been agreed to adopt the use of ProMonitor, which is the system currently in use by the Group Learning Support Team – standardisation across the faculties will make any future audit process much easier and also allow robust evidence of actual support provided to be gathered in a clear manner for any ALS funding claims that are made.

To access Promonitor Support Needs Tab there is an excellent How To video, produced by Vronwyn of the GLS Team, who will also be doing some online Training as part of the Initial Trial and Rollout please watch this to refresh yourself and understand where you need to go and what you need to record for both the Learning Support Plan and the Monthly Reviews.

The Induction Meeting - when the Learning Support Plan is completed with the Learner – is the ideal place to start the Support. It is your chance to have the learner focussed dialogue to understand their individual needs and to plan how you will work together. It is where you can begin to understand who they are, how they need you to work and how you can support them to achieve successfully.

Prior to going out to complete the Plan do take time to do some basic research into how to help overcome different Learning Difficulties – there are a great set of resources that are available on the links below to give you an understanding of where to start for any of these. Making some notes of possible support strategies may be useful but remember that there is no one-size fits all, the key to being successful in writing the plan and providing support is to be totally learner centric and focussed on what the Learner is telling you.

Completing the Learner Support Plan is not about fulfilling ESFA Funding regulations, instead it is your best opportunity to take time to ask them what they need, to decide on the reasonable adjustments you may need to make and to understand which ways of working will work for the Learner. Taking time to do this crucial meeting fully, to understand and support the Learner will pay dividends in terms of setting expectations and their meeting them.

Ask the learner questions, be prepared to explore further and to listen to what they are saying, keep your mind open and don't allow any pre-conceptions to taint your thinking. Build on the basic information that was gathered at their Pre-Induction Interview, and be prepared to ask questions to gain understanding, but do not put the learner under pressure to give you answers, some learners will struggle with being able to verbalise their feelings and may instead prefer to answer in written format, or they may need additional time to think before answering. The process is there to support them, if they start to feel stressed then take a break or arrange to complete the plan in a different way or at a different time.

The Support Plan needs to be completed on Promonitor – or your companies equivalent, it also needs to be as detailed as is possible, giving information on what the issues are, what support is needed, when, from whom and how this differs from the normal way we work with an Apprentice that does not have ALS needs. The Promonitor Learning Support Plan has been made as simple as possible to complete, with large areas being drop down menu choices and some tick boxes – which do need to be completed to gain full authority for the plan to be put in place and ALS funding to be claimed.

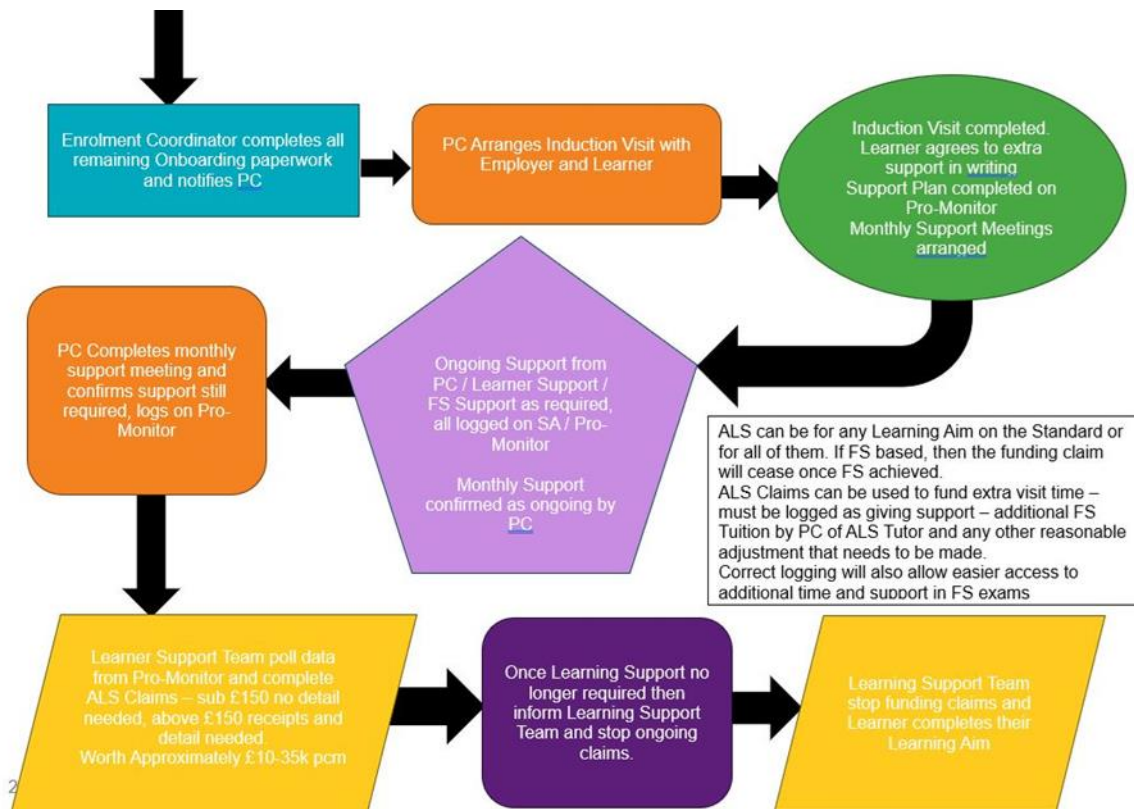
However, the more detail you can put in, the better, as it will gather the correct evidence for the funding but will also give us great evidence to show both the ESFA and OFSTED the great work that we are already doing.

All Learning Support Plans will be audited 100% for compliance and you will be asked to amend any that do not meet all the required level of compliance, so it is in your interests to complete them properly on the Induction visit rather than have to go back and redo them later.

Where a learner's ALS need surfaces later, or there is a short-term need for ALS you will still be required to complete a Learning Support Plan, which needs to be done

before any ALS funding claims can be completed. As always, the process should be the same, submit the evidence to GLS and a SENCO will then give a decision as to the claim and you will still need to complete all normal paperwork – monthly Learning Support Review, log hours on Excel spreadsheet.

Funding Claim procedures and Reviews



Once the Learner Support Plan is in place then we need to ensure we deliver the planned support monthly – as well as completing all the required evidence gathering and paperwork to ensure we can robustly claim the ALS funding. Each Learner receiving support allows us to claim £!50 per calendar month, of funding we have already been allocated. If we do not complete the claims then the funds will be clawed back by the ESFA.

Once we have the evidence of the ALS requirement and associated evidence (IA’s Handwritten exercise, SENCO decision and the Learner Support Plan) it becomes much easier to meet ESFA ALS funding requirements as there are only 3 steps to the whole process to be followed each month.

Firstly, we have to provide the agreed support, recording this in Promonitor (best practice would be to also add it to Smart Assessor). This could be direct support from the PC or from another specialist, such as the Lifeskills or GLS FS Specialist Tutor. No matter who delivers the support the PC – as the person responsible for facilitating the learner’s journey – must do the recording of the support on Promonitor.

Secondly, we need to complete a Learning Support Review with the Learner and record this on Promonitor, ensuring we get approval from the learner to continue to claim the ALS funding. GLS have created a new form specifically for the Apprenticeship Team to make doing this as simple as possible.

Thirdly, we need to record the funding claim – within Activate Learning this is done on an Excel spreadsheet so that our GLS Team can then add the claim to Espirals.

Supporting Learners

Please refer to the ALS – Basics of Support for a resource on how to deliver specific support strategies for individual ALN / SEND Needs.

Giving the right support to our Learners is not something that can be decided through a tick list exercise, it must be individualized to their needs, something that evolves with them as they grow and you understand more about them, and it must meet their ongoing needs. It would be relatively simple to write a checklist for each ALN condition, but ‘assessing by numbers’ is never entirely successful or engaging - far better is to use the basic support strategies as a starting point and talk with the learner, find out what works for them, what they would like to try and then allow the support to change as their needs change.

The ideal place to start the support as has been said before is during the creation of the Learning Support Plan - during the Learners Induction – or in the few weeks after that where necessary. Once we have the basic outline of the Plan and understand the Learner’s individual needs then it is up to us to ensure we work in a manner that works for the individual.

There is sometimes a feeling within certain facets of education that if a learner is not producing written work that they are ‘lazy’ or ‘disengaged’, this sort of feeling should always be challenged by the self and where appropriate further investigation undertaken as to why the Learner is not producing that work. For Learners with ALS

needs it can be extremely demoralising to have to produce written work, especially as they may have low confidence in their writing skills and know they will make mistakes in SPAG, and yet in other respects they may well be perfectly competent in their work and be able to evidence their KSB's quite easily through other means.

Each case is individual, each learner a unique person with their own needs, and each one should be approached with an open mind in terms of what reasonable adjustments we may need to make and how we seek to support them. Simple things like using a Digital Voice Recorder to complete a Professional Discussion or Q+A instead of a piece of written work may help to keep a learner who is struggling to be able to get back on track. Relating FS Maths and English training to their main interest may provide them with a reason why it is important that they couldn't otherwise see and enable them to engage in the learning in a much more successful way.

When a Learner is falling behind in their evidence gathering it is much better to pause, and to thoroughly explore what the issue is with the Learner instead of merely placing an increased workload burden on the Learner – if they haven't done the single assignment they were set since last seen why do you think they will be able to do double that work in time for their next due date?

Better to take remedial action, to plan additional visit and extra support and to adopt alternate evidence gathering methodology where it is needed – note this is not a get out of jail card for every learner who is not producing their coursework, but instead a means we can support those with a genuine issue that are engaged with their learning.

By doing this in a proactive manner you will find that your learners make smoother progress, you will have a caseload with less 'problems and your own stress levels will decline as well as seeing the results that your learners are achieving.

Once your Learner has completed the aim for which we are claiming the ALS Support don't forget to let GLS know so they can end the funding – some learners will only require ALS for their FS aims, others will require it throughout their Apprenticeship.

Prepare for EPA

For all Learners EPA is a stressful and sometimes difficult period, more so when they have ALS requirements, proper preparation, support and ensuring that all reasonable adjustments are booked with the EPAO is crucial to ensure their success at EPA.

It doesn't matter whether their ALS Support was provided for their FS or throughout their Apprenticeship, how we approach their EPA and how we support the learner can have a massive impact on whether they go into it confidently or not, and ultimately whether they are able to perform on the day and pass their EPA.

Good practice would be to start the dialogue about EPA and any support they feel they may need as early as possible, if possible it should be included in the Learning Support Plan and then discussed at each Monthly Learning Review, that way there is no surprise or stress about the forthcoming EPA, the learner is fully aware and knows you have done everything to ensure they will receive the support they need to perform.

As the EPA draws closer it would be advisable to confirm with the Learner and Employer what support they feel is appropriate for the EPA and to engage with the EPAO to ensure they are fully aware of the reasonable adjustments that the Learner requires.

Confirm with the Learner and Employer once this has been agreed with the EPAO so that they are fully kept in the loop and any stress on the Learner is kept to an absolute minimum.

EPA Reasonable Adjustments that can be made include but are not limited to the following:

- Extended time for assessment
- Breaks within Assessment
- Verbal Q+A completed as written Questions.
- Scribe or Reader
- Interpreter
- Rephrasing of Questions by the EPA Assessor

Once these are agreed, then arrange to perform one or two Mock EPA before signing off the Learners Gateway, give the learner as many chances as they need to feel comfortable in their EPA and you will give them the very best chance to perform well on the day and pass the EPA.

The Key as with many things is clarity of intent and clear communication, if the EPAO is made fully aware of the situation and the Learner knows what to expect then it goes a long way to removing the stress and allowing all learners – even those with what

could be considered severe learning and behavioural issues – to fully complete and pass their EPA successfully.

Conclusions

Staff feedback has indicated they found the training useful and feel more confident with the process and with how to provide support. Confidence and capability have risen from an initial survey rating of 47% (FS) and 67% (Main Aim) to a post training rating of 85% and 95% respectively– and confidence and capability in claiming ALS Funding payments has risen from 14% to 90%.

Supporting our Learners is something we are good at doing, however recording how and what we are doing has not previously been a priority, and because of this we are missing out on funding that has been assigned to us monthly. The sooner we can address the process and ensure that we are gathering the evidence required to meet ESFA ALS Funding regulations, then the sooner we can retain the funding and to use it to further support our teams.

Delivering ALS is not rocket science, nor is it something to be afraid of, it means working in a way that is learner focussed, listening, and responding to their individual needs and ensuring we keep the records that are needed, nothing more.

ALS Support is key to ensuring you can offer the best Learner Experience to all your Learners, especially for those with Additional Learning Needs.

Ensuring you have robust strategies in place as a starting point for ALS Support and comprehensive CPD training and Staff Development on ALS Support is crucial to ensuring your team can deliver on the Learner's needs.

Claiming the ALS Funding payments is not as difficult or as risky as is generally believed, a robust process, backed up with good CPD, Mandatory use and 100% audit allows you to ensure there is no risk of ESFA clawback.

ALS Funding allows you to deliver even more support as it affords the opportunity of reducing caseloads and employing specialist FS 121 tutors to support Learners with ALS needs that are not already catered for.

We would recommend the ETF AWD Project to anyone who needs to focus on an issue within their delivery, it affords a supported chance to take a fresh look at things

and to try new solutions Having an experienced mentor that supports you and provides a sounding board for ideas is also extremely useful, Helen (our mentor) has been positive and made great suggestions and given sound advice all through the project.

Do take the time to spend on the project and if needed to extend your project to ensure its delivery is completely right for your organisation, better to be a little late in completion than to rush something through and have to then backtrack.

Additional Information and Useful Links

Internal Link and resources – It is expected that Training Providers will link in their own resources for further use. One of the Activate Learning produced PowerPoints for ALN has been included in the pack as an exemplar.

External Links and Resources

Department for Education (2018), 'Exploring the funding and support for apprentices with additional support needs' [online]. Available from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/697649/Exploring_the_funding_and_support_for_apprentices_with_additional_support_needs.pdf [Accessed 14 September 2023].

Department for Education (2023). 'Apprenticeship funding rules August 2023 to July 2024' [online]. Available from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1155957/Apprenticeship_funding_rules_2324_Version_1.pdf

[Accessed 14 September 2023].

Education and Training Foundation (nd). 'Supporting Learners With Additional Needs: A Three-Tier Approach' [online]. Available from: [www.et-](http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Supporting_learners_with_additional_needs_-_23_Aug_2018.pdf)

[foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Supporting_learners_with_additional_needs_-_23_Aug_2018.pdf](http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Supporting_learners_with_additional_needs_-_23_Aug_2018.pdf) [Accessed 14 September 2023].

Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (2023). 'End-Point Assessment Reasonable Adjustments Guidance' [online]. Available from: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/quality/end-point-assessment-reasonable-adjustments-guidance/> [Accessed 14 September 2023].

Process Summary

Providing robust quality Additional Learning Support for our Learners is something that can enhance their chances of success as well as improving our success rates and increasing our available funds.

We have to follow the ESFA Accountability Framework and Funding Rules to be able to safely claim the ALS funding that we have already been allocated.

Admittedly there is a small additional admin burden for the PCs, we are working on integrating systems to reduce the time and administration required.

Process

- Learner states EHCP or self-assessed ALN declaration on Application
- Welcome and Success Team complete the IA's and pass to PC for Pre-Induction Interview
- PC completes Pre-Induction interview, gathers details of ALN and learner completes handwritten writing exercise.
- ALN Evidence is passed to Learning Support where a qualified SENCO makes the funding decision – Group Learning Support team complete first £150 ALS claim for the diagnostic process.
- Enrolment Coordinator completes Enrolment and passes the Learner to the PC to book Induction.
- PC completes Induction visit and completes the Learning Support Plan on ProMonitor
- PC can book FS 121 ALS support through Group Learning Support Team where Learner is unable to use Lifeskills or individual support from the PC to complete their FS.
- Monthly PC gives support as required, noting the additional hours of ALS as opposed to a visit without ALS – this is needed to make the claim.

- Monthly PC completes Learning Support 'Review' and agrees support is ongoing with Learner.
- Monthly PC completes recording of ALS provided on ProMonitor using new form – this can be also added to the ALS tab on SA
- Monthly PC logs the hours of ALS given on the Excel Spreadsheet for the Group Learning Support Team to claim on Espirals
- FS Exams - Exam Access Arrangements can be arranged through Group Learning Support Team, could include extra breaks, additional time, different format of test papers, a Scribe or Reader as required.
- When ALS is no longer required – due to completion of the Learning Aim that needed support (FS) or completion of the Apprenticeship Gateway – PC notifies the Group Learning Support Team who will close the funding.
- Gateway – PC and Group Learning Support work together to ensure any Reasonable Adjustments are made known to the EPAO and evidence required is available.

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